

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

CHRISTOPHER COX, CHAIRMAN <http://homeland.house.gov>



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Chairman Cox: Intelligence Sharing Essential for Preventing Terrorist Attacks

Washington, DC (Wednesday, July 20, 2005)— House Homeland Security Chairman Christopher Cox (R-CA) delivered the following opening statement at today's Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment hearing entitled "A Progress Report on Information Sharing for Homeland Security":

"A progress report on information sharing for Homeland Security is a welcome thing—and an indispensable part of this Committee's oversight responsibilities.

"This morning, we begin by hearing from State, local, and tribal government officials. That is unconventional only because we in Washington have had a tendency to focus our attention on Executive branch agencies—on the Federal government. But the homeland security enterprise, properly conceived, calls for a different approach: State, local, and tribal governments are supposed to be equal partners with the Federal government in a joint enterprise. And, so they must be, if potential terrorist attacks are to be prevented across this country in the future. The Federal government—even DHS—isn't everywhere. State, local, and tribal governments, by contrast, are.

"It has been well over two years since the Attorney General, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Secretary of Homeland Security signed their Memorandum of Understanding on Information Sharing committing intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security agencies alike to certain core principles. That MOU called for specific actions to implement the Homeland Security Act of 2002. That Memorandum of Understanding contains the following plain statement:

“ ‘Providing all timely and relevant [homeland security-related information] to those who have a need-to-know it in order to assist them in meeting their homeland security-related responsibilities is fundamental to the success of the Department and [to] all other efforts to ensure the security of the homeland from terrorist attack. Delay in providing such information risks frustrating efforts to meet these critical responsibilities and could result in preventable attacks against U.S. persons or interests failing to be preempted, prevented, or disrupted.’ [MOU at sec. 3(h)]

“We on this Committee have often stressed that preventing terrorist attacks must be our overriding priority. And we, like every commission and blue-ribbon panel that has investigated the 9/11 attacks, understand that the failure promptly to share all pertinent information was the single preeminent factor in the government’s failure to prevent the 9/11 attacks. It was, in fact, two years ago almost to the day that, in opening a Select Committee hearing on this same topic, I myself noted that:

“ ‘If it is true that, as the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks teaches, information—good intelligence—is the lifeblood of homeland security, then it is also true that that information must move, must circulate. Sadly, that hasn’t always happened.’

“That was my assessment of the state of affairs in July 2003, and that is why we’re here today. Two years later, it is fair to expect real progress. We want to be reassured that DHS, in particular, has engaged its non-Federal government counterparts as equal partners in the homeland security enterprise. We want to know that there are now mutually satisfactory mechanisms to enable the two-way flow of information to and from DHS and its State, local, and tribal government partners. That, in itself, would be real progress.

“So, Mr. Chairman, I would like to focus on what is realistic and what would not be realistic progress to expect. It might be unrealistic to expect State, local, and tribal governments’ preventive efforts to be very effective if they are not routinely informed by the relevant predictive intelligence that the Federal government produces. Nor would the Federal government be serving its non-Federal customers well if it merely passes on a welter of raw information or if by speaking to those customers with an inconsistent analytic voice—a problem this Committee addressed squarely in passing the

Department's initial authorization act, H.R. 1817, which was overwhelmingly just two months ago.

“So today, we look forward to hearing that information sharing has progressed, and we hope to hear how the structural reforms engendered by the Secretary's Second-Stage Review will further consolidate and enhance that progress. Where, by contrast, shortcomings emerge, I am confident that this Committee will continue to lead in the effort to ensure that a failure adequately to share information can never again be cited as the reason a terrorist attack could succeed.”

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